

พระอาจารย์ เปลียน ปัญญาปทีโป
PHRA ACHARN PLIEN PANYAPATIPO



เมตตาธรรม คำจุนโลก
KINDNESS AS A SUPPORT
FOR THE WORLD

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KINDNESS AS A SUPPORT FOR THE WORLD

PHRA ACHARN PLIEN PANYAPATIPO

A Dhamma talk on loving kindness (mettā)

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KINDNESS

AS A SUPPORT FOR THE WORLD

For all of you here today who have faith in the Dhamma, I wish to offer a Dhamma talk concerning **loving kindness (mettā)** as a support for the world. We should consider and reflect upon this teaching so as to understand how to conduct and adjust our lives to the conditions of the world. This will bring about happiness both for oneself and others. The Lord Buddha himself explained about this in the **Four Brahma Vihārā*** (the four sublime abidings) where mettā comprises one of these four forms of meditation. Those of you who have already developed this practice will have found happiness and peace, and a mind firmly established in meditation.

Our birth as complete, human beings in this life,

*The Four Brahma Vihāras or Sublime Abidings are the meditations on 1) Mettā or loving-kindness; 2) Karuna or compassion; 3) Muditā or sympathetic joy; 4) Upekkhā or equanimity.

is dependent on our development of **past virtues (paramī)**.

Once born into this world it is only kindness for each other which enables us to live together peacefully. The word **mettā** is an Indian word which we can translate as **loving-kindness, mutual love or friendliness**. It is the quality which allows people to live together without conflict. Such living together in peace and harmony, requires mutual love and co-operation. Even to see loving kindness expressed by others inspires joy and happiness in ourselves. Whatever we do, if we have loving kindness it will be recognizable to others also. Mutual love when expressed, no matter what situation we are in, will be felt by all; even animals would sense that we are no threat to them. Wherever a kind person goes, he will make that place a happy and peaceful place to live. Reflecting upon this, one can see that all of us, whether old or young—even a child—can live together in harmony if we have kindness for each other, harming neither man nor animal. In a country where people lack kindness, trying to take advantage of others, trying to harm and destroy their lives,

there can be no happiness. Anyone living in such a place would find it difficult to sleep peacefully, out of constant fear of violence. Hence the Lord Buddha encouraged us to show loving kindness, manifested in a smile or expression of good will. Such gestures initiate happiness and joy between people. We would then treat others with consideration, not causing them harm, suffering or danger. If it were like this wouldn't we all live happily together.

Thoughtfulness between family members or amongst colleagues in the work place, makes any interactions or dealings together smooth and successful. We would then work together as brothers and sisters without inflicting pain on each other. This is one aspect of happiness. Mutual kindness will also enable people to work together without conflict, everyone knowing their respective duties, being able to co-operate together in harmony and becoming true friends (kalyānamitta). Differences in ages and generation would be no obstacle to friendship because of mutual respect and love. We all wish to live in happiness and at ease, and this requires love and kindness, seeing other to

be as dear as ourselves. This becomes difficult if we still have jealousy, dissatisfaction and hatred. We must therefore try to treat others with loving kindness until finally the heart defiled by anger and envy is stilled.

The Lord Buddha showed the method to develop mutual love and kindness for each other. Should an enemy or rival scold, cause difficulties, create ill will or even endanger our life--- What can we do under these circumstances to cultivate a heart endowed with loving kindness and sympathy for that person? This is an important point to reflect upon. The Lord Buddha advised us to extend mettā to that person, wishing them happiness and comfort, freedom from disease and hardship. However, should feelings of anger, jealousy and dislike still remain in our heart even though we have tried to extend loving kindness to our adversary, then the Lord Buddha instructed us to turn to a neutral person. He advised us to spread feelings of mettā to a person who we neither love nor hate. We will then find that the heart is not swayed by either affection or dislike, it is impartial and balanced.

From there we direct our loving kindness to those who are most dear to us. This may be our child, grandchild, brother, sister, husband, wife, friend, grandfather, grandmother, teacher or senior colleague. This is a person who we love so there are no feelings of jealousy or aversion, our minds will therefore become content untroubled by anger or hatred. We can then return to trying to spread metta to our adversary or the person we dislike, wishing him physical and spiritual happiness, comfort, riches and honour; whatever we want him to receive.

If negative feelings still remain then we should direct our thoughts of kindness back to the person we love. Our mind will be uplifted and inspired, and we can then direct our loving kindness towards a neutral person once again, someone we neither love nor hate. When the mind is balanced, untroubled by animosity it can be turned again towards our antagonist. If negative feelings still arise then one should try to repeat the same procedure again, up to five times. If the mind still proves to be stubborn then the Lord Buddha advised us to use mindfulness and wisdom

to critically analyze inside oneself. One must question why our mind persistently indulges in such obstinacy. We should reproach and admonish ourselves. We can extend loving kindness to those we love and even to neutral people, but why is it that we still have hatred for others? It is because of our own foolishness. It is we who suffer, our hearts being troubled and upset by such thoughts of hatred and aversion! We must use mindfulness and wisdom to remedy this and then return to radiating loving kindness to those we love, to neutral people and to our adversary.

Keep on developing this practice until the loved person is loved, the neutral person is loved and we even have loving kindness for the person who attempted to destroy our lives. We can love them all as much as we love ourselves. Now we can radiate our feelings of mettā to the whole world. We can then be free from hatred, living together harmoniously and in happiness.

If we continue with this practice and the people of the world determine to do good and have kindness for each other, then we will all, without doubt, be happy. The Lord

Buddha confirmed that if we are confident in the Teaching to love others as we love ourselves, then our safeguarding of the **first precept*** — to abstain from killing — will automatically be complete. There's no need to go and formally request the precept from a monk because the first precept is already naturally upheld. By developing kindness one withdraws from inflicting harm and pain onto other living beings. This is the way for all of us to live together in harmony as brothers and sisters, without wars, division and animosity. This is the practice of mettā or loving kindness that we should all endeavour to cultivate, and it comprizes the first of the sublime abidings.

Karunā or compassion is the second factor of the sublime abidings. Compassion is aroused on witnessing one's fellow beings experiencing suffering. Specifically, it concerns when one is moved by others' suffering and pain,

*This refer to the five precepts of Buddhists : to abstain from : 1. Intentionally taking life 2. Stealing 3. Improper sexual conduct 4. Lying and wrong speech 5. Drugs and intoxicants.

and seek a means to relieve such anguish. We may see for example, a marine creature stranded on the beach and consider how to return it to the safety of the water. Similarly, how should we act to save an animal that has fallen into water and is in danger of drowning? Human beings who have a virtuous heart will have compassion for all beings, even animals. In the same way we must develop loving kindness, generosity and charity to those fellow human beings undergoing hardship, need or who are physically handicapped. We should provide medical treatment, sympathetic support and encouragement to those who are ill, doing so with loving kindness and compassion. We try our best to help them, hoping that they will recover.

The Lord Buddha wished for us to have compassion for each other. A heart of compassion will always find a way to aid those in trouble, whether in this country or elsewhere, whether, human or animal. Such compassion must also include wisdom, so as to find the best means to help. In some situations one must be circumspect and consider the legal complications that may

arise due to misunderstandings as to one's motives. For instance, in a car accident or shooting, one should reflect carefully on the appropriate way to help so that the police, for example, will not mistake one's actions.

Compassion is a quality of the heart which when manifested, uplifts and inspires the beneficiary and leads to harmony throughout the world. You may wonder how speech alone can offer encouragement to others. Just consider how we are able to help a person through their grief and suffering with kind words of consolation and advice. By using wisdom and discernment we can help to create in that person a more balanced, joyful state of mind, free from grief and misery. This is an example of compassion shown through words that come from the heart.

The heart of compassion is also, at the same time, endowed with loving kindness because these two virtues always arise together. There is then no room left in the heart for jealousy or vengeance towards any being. Thus compassion is manifested through kind words and helpful deeds.

We should deeply ponder upon the love of parents for their children, whatever their age, however mischievous and disobedient they may be, their parent's loving concern still remains even though they may have grown up and become adults. A father and mother's love for their children never ceases, even though a child may not fully appreciate the extent of that love.

Mutual love encompasses kindness, compassion and good will. The two virtues of loving kindness and compassion alone are enough to bring great happiness. Wherever we may travel, through city, mountain or deep jungle we will be safe and free from harm.

The third factor of the sublime abidings is **sympathetic joy at others' success and good fortune (muditā)**. This feeling of delight and felicitation is something difficult to achieve due to a lack of mindfulness and wisdom. There is then insufficient loving kindness to correct the weakness of comparing ourselves to others and their success. It is difficult to congratulate others on their promotion, prosperity and advancement, if we ourselves do

not share such good fortune. Sympathetic joy can only be possible if your heart is truly endowed with loving kindness, and this is what the Lord Buddha recommended us to cultivate. However, for the most part such joy arises only on the success of our own friends and relatives. Some parents will be delighted that their children have passed an examination or obtained a promotion, however if similar achievements happen to the children of others then they feel depressed and lack any feelings of joy. We must try to recognise that success is a matter of the coming to fruition of a person's good deeds done in the past. So there is no use asking why a person prospers although he doesn't seem to deserve it, or why don't I prosper since I work so hard? We should not think in this way. Rather we should delight in the prosperity and happiness of others and congratulate them on their success. We should have loving kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy, and express them when we hear of others' promotion in rank or position, of their increase in salary, reputation and standard of living, and of their good fortune and happiness. We

should be pleased to bear witness to the results of their good deeds done in the past. Then everybody will be happy and we can all experience peace and joy.

The forth factor of the sublime abidings is **equanimity (upekkhā)**. It should be understood that equanimity in the sublime abidings may sometimes be tainted with defilements. Some people have equanimity towards people they don't like, however this is really indifference. One remains unconcerned by others' ill health or loss of fortune etc., and this can also be called one aspect of equanimity.

Another aspect of equanimity is realizing that it is beyond one's capabilities to help all of one's friends and all the people in the world. Equanimity is also the quality of remaining unaffected by the gossip and scoldings of other people, however highly placed or inferior to us they may seem to be. Most of us can remain indifferent to the people we dislike while we cannot do likewise to those we have affection for. This is because of the four kinds of prejudice caused by love, dislike, folly and fear. As long

as these prejudices or biases remain in the heart, perfect equanimity will be impossible. Sometimes we can be impartial while at other times we cannot, so we are still subject to grief and anger. Just consider being scolded by someone. We may not yet be able to react with complete equanimity but we can still pass beyond it and let it be. Just let go of it. This is the impartiality and equanimity of the sublime abidings.

What is equanimity with regard to feeling (*vedanā*)? It is feeling impartial to what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch; whether such sense objects be pleasant or unpleasant. For example, we remain impartial and let go of feelings of extreme heat and cold. Not feeling well or minor pains can be let go of—like sitting here now practising loving kindness meditation, we can treat the painful feelings that arise in our legs and arms for example, with indifference and impartiality. The feelings which arise based on pleasant sight, sound, taste and touch are called pleasant feelings, and we can at times even remain impartial to these. Unpleasant sights, sounds, tastes and

touch naturally cause unpleasant feelings, yet we can still occasionally manage to remain indifferent to these sensations. This is called equanimity of feeling.

The third kind of equanimity is **that of the factor of enlightenment (upekkha sambojjhanga)**. This type of equanimity is endowed with wisdom, understanding and discernment. We should train ourselves to develop this form of equanimity so as to comprehend the true nature of compounded things. Clearly understanding the arising persisting and the passing away of compounded things, of beings in the world, both human and animal. This is the natural cycle that occurs in people of all races; to men, women and children. **Using wisdom one realises the truth of nature, that once born into the world a person must grow old, experience illness and finally die.** All beings must submit to this truth of Dhamma, For it is their nature to be subject to birth, illness and death. If one can clearly see this with wisdom it will lead to the equanimity that is a factor of enlightenment.

By accepting this truth we are no longer upset and

troubled by the way things are. We can but try our best to help our fellow beings in this world of suffering. For example, we can help take a sick person to the doctor, or try to nurse him or her to the best of our ability. If that person should then die this should be accepted with equanimity and without grief. We may be able to help with money and medicines, or take care of the elderly so that they are looked after in every way—nursing them and bathing them and giving them a home. When the time finally arrives for them to depart of this world there is nothing more that we can do. We can only accept this event with equanimity and realize that this is the true nature of conditioned things, with our mind remaining calm and serene.

Having been born into this world we need loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity so as to be able to live together in happiness. If our hearts lack the qualities of equanimity, mindfulness and wisdom then we will experience sorrow and despair. Without equanimity the four sublime abidings are incomplete. We

are not yet free and have not released our grasp on suffering.

Some people go overboard and give all they have to try to make others happy, while they themselves become poor and destitute. Such excessive kindness without wise equanimity can only lead to unhappiness. That is why the Lord Buddha urged us to be wise and discerning about these four sublime abidings, for they are virtues for the mature.

The final type of equanimity is that equanimity incorporating perfect knowledge, achieved by the Lord Buddha through His enlightenment, allowing Him to clearly see with insight and thus let go of the world. He went beyond the world and left us behind. If we had been born at the time of the Lord Buddha and had had the opportunity to listen to His teachings and yet were unable to comprehend the truth that He taught, then He can only leave us behind in our ignorance. We would then have to be caught in the cycle of life and death, continuously up until the present time. The Lord Buddha realized He could not lead all of us to reach enlightenment, therefore He viewed the world with equanimity. We must

understand the reasons for this and try to practise the path. We must let go of things when nothing else can be done. For example, having tried our best to instruct others who stubbornly refuse to listen, then the only alternative is to relinquish our efforts to teach them.

However, such teaching must still be done with loving kindness. This is the way of the Lord Buddha and to achieve happiness in this life we must follow in His footsteps. Without equanimity and wisdom excessive kindness can lead to suffering and turmoil, as in the case of giving money to addicts to buy drink or drugs. Being intoxicated they might then quarrel and fight or even kill each other. Similarly, giving money to a gambler would only help lead to his or her downfall — this is false kindness. **Kindness should be offered with wisdom. Compassion and sympathetic joy must likewise be rendered with wisdom.** We should not congratulate someone on the success of their misdeeds, but on the contrary should endeavour to advise him or her to lead a more skilful and wholesome life. If such advice is ignored then

we can only give up and let go.

It is like the parent's concern and love for their children and grandchildren. They teach, but if the children refuse to listen they must let go with equanimity until the next opportunity to explain. The parents continue in this way throughout their lives until the child understands. This is the method for advising others whether it is between relatives, or between the meditation teacher and his disciples.

All of us, whatever our age, can live together happily and in harmony if the four sublime abidings endowed with wisdom are present in the heart. In this way even children with these qualities can be considered mature. It is the four sublime abidings which give rise to peace and joy in the heart and this is why the Lord Buddha said that "loving kindness supports the world"

All of us who are Buddhists should take this teaching to heart and cultivate ourselves in virtue. There is much evil in this world because people do not develop themselves in wholesome qualities. It is just through a lack

of the four sublime abidings that there is turmoil in this world; not for any other reason. For those of us who wish to cultivate virtue, we should carefully reflect and draw this Dhamma into the heart. Train yourself so that these four qualities arise in the mind and you shall then receive the fruit of happiness.

Those endowed with a heart of loving kindness experience these following benefits:

1. One is not disturbed by nightmares.
2. On waking one looks pleasant and radiant.
3. One rarely experiences illness.
4. One looks young and has a radiant complexion.
5. One rarely encounters any danger.
6. One is protected from and undisturbed by entities from other realms.
7. One is guarded by heavenly beings.
8. One is able to easily concentrate in meditation.
9. After death one obtains to a good rebirth.
10. If one should reach a high level of meditation, then rebirth will take place in the Brahma realms.

Therefore all of us should show loving kindness to our fellow human beings and animals. These are virtues of mature people, who, wherever they may be, well know their responsibilities for living harmoniously and happily together. Please remember what I have said today concerning the four Brahma Viharas. The Lord Buddha described these four virtues as being a support for the world and if you observe and cultivate them, you will find happiness and peace. May all of you be blessed with long life, grace, happiness and good health.

